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NEW-HAVEN GAZETTE.

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The ORIGIN of PRINTING.

(From a late writer.)

THE present art is but three hundred and forty years old. It long remained an undetermined point between the city of Mentz in Germany, and the city of Haerlem in Holland, concerning the place where, and the person by whom, this divine art was first invented and practised; but at this time the majority of voices have determined the dispute in favor of Mentz.

It is said to be first attempted at Mentz, between the years 1440 and 1450, by John Fust or Faust, John Meydenbuch, and John Genesteisch, surnamed Guttemberg. It was long a controverted question, by many learned antiquarians, whether Guttemberg or Faust, was the inventor of that art; until happily the original instrument was found. This instrument, which is dated November 6, 1455, is decisive in favor of Guttemberg: But the honor of single types, made of metal, is ascribed to Faust, wherein he received great assistance from his servant and son-in-law Peter Schoeffer, who devised the puncheons, matrices and moulds for casting them, on which account he was taken into partnership by his father-in-law, who, in 1455, had a quarrel with, and separated from, Guttemberg. Those who have asserted that Faust was the first inventor of printing, have given for a reason, that they have never seen any book with Guttemberg's name to it; without considering, that their first essays in printing, both by blocks and moveable Types, being sold for manuscripts, were anonymous, the invention being by them intended to be kept secret; nor was it divulged until their disagreement, by which time Faust had made himself master of the art, and Guttemberg was not able to proceed in it alone, owing to his circumstances.

The learned Dr. Willis, of Oxford, made a studious inquisition into the origin of this invention, and in the following manner delivers his opinion: "About the "year 1450 the art of printing "was invented and practised in "Germany; but whether first at "Mentz or Haerlem, is not determined; for it appears upon "an impartial enquiry, that those "who had it in consideration be-"fore it was brought to perfection, "disagreeing among themselves, "separated company, and some "of them at Haerlem, and others "at Mentz, pursued the practice "of their former employ, at one "and the same time."

There is at Mentz, on the front of the house wherein Guttemberg lived, a latin inscription put up in the year 1507, to the following purport:

THIS MONUMENT
IS ERECTED
TO THE MEMORY OF
JOHN GUTTEMBERG,
OF MENTZ,
WHO FIRST INVENTED
THE ART
OF PRINTING,
AND BY THIS ART
DESERVED THE APPLAUSE
OF THE WORLD.

The first printed book upon record is the book of psalms, by John Faust, of Mentz, and Peter Schoeffer, in 1457, on the 14th of August. However, after this first essay, they are supposed to have printed Durand's rationale divinorum, in 1459, and the latin vocabulary entitled, catholicon, in 1460. But what signalized Faust and his art most was, the first printed bible, which he began in 1450, and finished in 1460; when Faust, carrying a parcel of printed copies of it to Paris, and offering them to sale as manuscripts, had the misfortune to be imprisoned, under suspicion of dealing with the devil; because the French could not otherwise conceive how so many books should so exactly agree in every letter and point; nor could he obtain his liberty, till he had discovered the method by which they were done.

Hitherto the proficient in this art had proceeded no further than in the common Alphabet, suited to the vulgar and latin tongues. The Gothic Alphabet, as it most resembled the manuscripts of those times, was the first attempt; then some of the Italian Princes introduced the Roman Alphabet; and, in a short time, brought it to that perfection, that, in the begining of the year 1474, they cast a letter not much inferior to the best types of the present age.

At last the Italick Alphabet came much in vogue; but there were no Greek types till about the year 1476, when the Italian printers cast them upon the same principles as they had done the other Alphabets: Yet we are not able to ascertain, whether this was first introduced by the Venetians, Milanese, or Florentines, each of them claiming the reputation of that improvement: Tho' it is universally allowed, that two Jewish Rabbins, Joshua and Moses, were the first who published the Hebrew character in separate types, at Saccino, a small city in the Duchy of Milan, in the year 1480.

The first printed books were either large or small folio's, or at least quarto's: The lesser sizes were not in use. The leaves were without running title, direction-word, number of pages, or divisions into paragraphs.

The character itself was a rude old Gothic mixed with Secretary, designed on purpose to imitate the hand-writing of those times. The words were printed so close to one another, that it was difficult and tedious to be read, even by those who were used to manuscripts, and to this method; and often led the inattentive reader into mistakes.

Their orthography was various, and often arbitrary, disregarding method.

They had very frequent abbreviations, which in time grew so numerous and difficult to be understood, that there was a necessity of writing a book to teach the manner of reading them.

Their periods were distinguished by no other points than the double and single one, that is, the colon and full-point; but they a little after introduced an oblique stroke, thus, /, which answered the purpose of our comma.

They used no capital letters to begin a sentence, or for proper names of men or places.

They left blanks for the places of titles, initial letters, and other ornaments, in order to have them supplied by the illuminators; whose ingenious art, though in vogue before and at that time, did not long survive the masterly improvements made by the printers in this branch of their art. Those ornaments were exquisitely fine, and curiously variegated with the most beautiful colours, and even with gold and silver: The margins likewise were frequently charged with variety of figures of saints, birds, beasts, monsters, flowers, &c. which had sometimes relation to the contents of the page, tho' often none at all. Those embellishments were very costly; but for those that could not afford a great price, there were inferior ornaments, which could be done at a much easier rate.

The name of the Printer, place of his residence, &c. were wholly neglected, or put at the end of the book, not without some pious ejaculation or doxology.

The date was likewise omitted, or involved in some crampt circumstantial period; or else printed either at full length, or by numerical letters; and sometimes partly one, and partly the other; thus, one thousand CCCC, and LXXIII, &c. but all of them at the end of the book.

There was no variety of characters, no intermixture of Roman and Italick; they are of later invention; but their pages were continued in a Gothic letter of the same size throughout.

As to their book-binding, Scaliger tells us, that his Grand-Mother had a printed Psalter, the cover of which was *two inches thick*.

We have now no occasion to wait the slow result of the transcriber; but with a little labour and easy expence, may store our libraries with all the knowledge of our learned progenitors; and have it in our power, with a little study, to be masters of those arts, which they only attained to with the greatest labour and industry. Printing revived LEARNING, which in less than one century introduced the REFORMATION. If any would be at the trouble to compare the present body of our people, in regard to literature and their capacities in affairs, with those of our ancestors, who flourished 400 years ago, when there was no printing, they will readily acknowledge, that this curious art hath not a little contributed to the benefit and improvement of mankind.

From the Citizen *of the* World.

A GAZETTE is the joint manufacture of Europe, and he who would peruse it with a philosophical eye, might perceive, in every paragraph, something characteristick of the nation to which it belongs. A map does not exhibit a more distinct view of the boundaries and situation of every country, than its news does a picture of the genius, and the morals of its inhabitants. The superstition and erroneous delicacy of Italy, the formality of Spain, the cruelty of Portugal, the fears of Austria, the confidence of Prussia, the levity of France, the avarice of Holland, the pride of England, the absurdity of Ireland, and the national partiality of Scotland, are all conspicuous in every page.

But, perhaps, you may find more satisfaction in a real newspaper, than in my description of one: I therefore send you a few, which may serve to exhibit the manner of their being written, and distinguish the character of the various nations which are united in its composition.

Naples. We have lately dug up here a curious Etruscan monument, broke in two in the raising. The characters are scarce visible; but Nugosi, the learned antiquary, supposes it to have been erected in honor of Picus, a latin king, as one of the lines may be plainly distinguished to begin with a P. It is hoped this discovery will produce something valuable, as the literati of our twelve academies are deeply engaged in the disquisition.

(The last page gives the remainder.)